Academic Integrity in Social Sciences

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on academic integrity in social sciences with an emphasis on university teaching and learning processes. There is a substantial body of work on integrity among business students and students in behavioral sciences. These constitute the main foci of this chapter. The chapter synthesizes the literature in these areas and identifies practices through which academic integrity has been promoted in social sciences. While much of the existing literature focuses on negative aspects, that is, dishonesty, cheating, and the lack of integrity, some literature on teaching and learning provides evidence of aspects

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T. Bretag (ed.), *Handbook of Academic Integrity*,
DOI 10.1007/978-981-287-098-8_47

that promote academic integrity in social sciences. These include formal ethics and integrity education, integrated ethics content, early exposure to ethics content, and a focus on trainers and senior academics, as well as the community, integrity policy, and research practices. Some features in the different fields of social sciences may bring about specific integrity challenges. Where pertinent, such features are discussed. For instance, conventions and practices in thesis supervision may differ markedly among fields, creating specific challenges. Possible caveats for integrity are identified and discussed.

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to outline how academic integrity has been approached in the literature within social sciences and to identify whether based on the literature, there are special integrity concerns in this discipline. A second aim is to identify measures taken in the social sciences to promote high integrity standards. In order to identify perspectives, concerns, and remedies, key trends have been sought among academic integrity studies in different fields of social sciences. The core observation is that the perspective taken in research on academic integrity in social sciences often pertains to the student perspective. Yet academic integrity concerns in social sciences are often more structural in nature and cannot be solved by individuals alone without also addressing system level issues. Finally, research on teaching and learning suggests that there are ways in which academia and its members can promote academic integrity in positive ways. This chapter presents an overview of the cumulative knowledge base. In doing so, it draws on two types of studies, namely, studies that: (1) highlight aspects for which a relatively substantial research base can be found (e.g., conceptions of misconduct among business students) and (2) present perspectives that shed light on aspects that may be either typical or unique for the social sciences and which could have a bearing on academic integrity (e.g., prevalence of project work, distance studies or ways of organizing doctoral supervision).

Since the focus is on academic integrity, the reviewed literature necessarily relates to aspects of research ethics. However, the primary focus is specifically on academic integrity as honesty and as an attitude or a value pertaining to various aspects of academic life. In line with Jordan's taxonomy of concepts, academic integrity is here defined as "logically coherent positions on ideal moral behavior, backed by actions that demonstrate this position, practised by individuals or institutions in an education, research or scholarship setting" (Jordan 2013, p. 252). Issues pertaining to professional ethics are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Social sciences (e.g., sociology, economics, psychology and counseling, education, anthropology, political science) (cf. Klemke et al. 1980) excluding law, which is discussed in a separate chapter in this volume, include a relatively broad collection of fields with different emphases on basic and applied research. This chapter summarizes research on integrity (and the lack of it) mainly in behavioral sciences and business and economics. There is less research evidence from other social sciences fields.

Research on Integrity in Social Sciences: Focus on the Student Perspective

Behavioral Sciences: Education and Psychology

There is extensive research on academic integrity – both the lack of it as well as the learning of it – in behavioral sciences. Research has focused on conceptions of dishonesty, misconduct, and related behaviors. In a seminal study on dishonesty in the field of education, Ferrell and Daniel (1995) identified cheating on tests and assignments, inappropriate use of resources, and manipulation among undergraduate teacher education students. According to education students, the most severe forms of academic misconduct were related to fraudulent behaviors, such as taking an exam for another student, copying or buying papers, and using cheat sheets. These are clearly behaviors that lack integrity and that could allow the perpetrator to gain an unfair advantage over honestly behaving individuals.

Simultaneously, research shows that students do not reject some behaviors that are generally considered unethical or as misconduct in academia, such as fabricating references (Royal et al. 2011). Records on school psychology students' academic integrity breaches include cases of cheating, changing grades, forging letters of recommendation, stealing money from the university, fabricating assignment protocols, and fabricating attendance hours (Tryon 2000). Beyond professional ethics breaches, plagiarism in dissertation and course work, collusion, and falsification, including various forms of exam cheating, tend to be the most common academic integrity breaches among psychology students (Fly et al. 1997; Tryon 2000). Students in social sciences may not differ from students in other fields in terms of judgment of situations and behaviors (e.g., authorship and beliefs about reporting a dispute). Students estimate the consequences of informing on another person as severe, the likelihood of reporting a perceived wrongdoing as low, and the effect of doing so as only moderate (Rose and Fischer 1998).

Sometimes the expectations that senior researchers in behavioral sciences may have of their junior colleagues are high in terms of moral judgment. Perhaps as a consequence of the extent of exposure to moral content in their studies (e.g., Butterfield et al. 2000), psychology graduate teaching assistants have been documented to be required to take on responsibilities for which they are too inexperienced and hardly prepared or trained (Branstetter and Handelsman 2000). Many of the practices, such as teaching courses which they are insufficiently prepared to teach, are considered unethical. Graduate students find themselves in situations that they perceive to be unethical and which require actions that do not meet their conceptions of integrity. Graduate students may have been socialized to "cutting corners," or they may have gained an increased sense of competence and power that comes with experience, but which may lead them to taking ethical shortcuts (Branstetter and Handelsman 2000).

Doctoral education and academic supervision practices in social sciences tend to differ from those in natural and life sciences. In social sciences, although team-based models of conducting research are becoming more and more frequent, it still

appears to be more common for student-supervisor interactions to take place within a one-on-one or personal relationship rather than a team-based model of research work and supervision (e.g., Delamont et al. 2000; Hakala 2009). This means that in these fields the students' research tends to be based on their own initiative rather than being a part of the supervisor's project. This is a matter of convention and disciplinary practice, and there may not be one single supervision model that fits all fields. However, the model for organizing academic supervision may bear consequences for the type of integrity issues that arise.

In the dyadic model of supervision prevalent in many fields in the social sciences, doctoral students gravitate toward individual professors. This provides a good ground for negotiating and assuring the commitment of both parties, but it may also increase the risk for a solitary process and for narrowing the theoretical and methodological perspectives which may infringe on a student's autonomy (Löfström and Pyhältö 2014). Students in these fields may be less exposed to researcher malpractice due to limited interaction with faculty but also less exposed to situations that will benchmark the expected standards and exemplify good practice. Doctoral students in the behavioral sciences have been found to experience a wider range of ethical and moral problems in supervision. Breaches of beneficence and autonomy-related ethical issues have been found to be more commonly emphasized in the behavioral sciences (as opposed to natural sciences) (Löfström and Pyhältö 2014). Academics in research environments that largely rely on dyadic models of guidance and interaction must exercise great caution and be alert to integrity concerns involving exploitation or loss of their own objectivity (Holmes et al. 1999).

It has been suggested that compared to students of other subjects, students of psychology, due to the nature of the subject itself, may become more exposed to ethical issues and moral language (Butterfield et al. 2000). Furthermore, disciplines such as psychology, which utilize assignments that are open ended in nature, may have fewer cases of unauthorized collaboration (Barrett and Cox 2005).

Economics and Business Studies

In comparison with most other social sciences fields, there is a substantial research base covering integrity and misconduct in economics and business subjects, perhaps as a result of the corporate collapses attributed to unethical behavior (O'Leary and Cotter 2000; Smyth and Davis 2004; Beauvais et al. 2007; Mirshekary et al. 2010). Concerns have been expressed over business schools teaching students to be successful without placing sufficient emphasis on moral responsibilities (Stevens et al. 1993).

In studies comparing the cheating behaviors among students in different fields, business students have been shown to be more likely to cheat than others (McCabe and Treviño 1995; Smyth and Davis 2004; McCabe et al. 2006) and more tolerant of unethical behavior (Segal et al. 2011). Common forms of dishonesty among business students include exam cheating and unauthorized collusion

(Brown 1995). Self-reported incidents of dishonesty range between 13 % and 91 % in studies on business students and students taking business or marketing classes (for reviews see Brown 1995; Teixeira and Rocha 2010) depending on how dishonesty or misconduct has been defined. Students' conceptions of integrity and dishonesty have bearings not just for how they study but also for how they approach responsibilities assigned to them in other contexts. Students with a greater tolerance for cheating and dishonesty have been shown to be more likely to behave in a dishonest manner in their subsequent work (Nonis and Swift 2001). Business students' comparatively greater tolerance for unethical behavior has been associated with self-selection and students' understanding of business as amoral (Segal et al. 2011). The relationships between the evolution of values, features of the learning environment, and disciplinary norms and cultures deserve more attention in future studies.

In addition, high levels of self-reported ethical orientation and a low level of self-reported tolerance for cheating (Mirshekary et al. 2010) have been observed among business students. A large number of undergraduate business students agree that cheating is unethical, but a significant number find cheating to be the norm of otherwise socially acceptable behavior (Smyth and Davis 2004; Chapman et al. 2004), suggesting that peer pressure may work against the students' own moral evaluation of a situation. In addition to peer behavior, perceived certainty of a peer informing on them and the level of understanding and acceptance of institutional integrity policies have been shown to influence business students' behavior (McCabe et al. 2006).

Research suggests that cheating takes place more commonly among friends and residential peers (Smyth and Davis 2004; Kidwell and Kent 2008; Teixeira and Rocha 2010) which could pose a challenge in business studies, in which there is an emphasis on collaborative project work (Chapman et al. 2004). However, teamwork skills are a necessary graduate attribute, and the research findings emphasize the importance of communicating expectations to students. The fact that in disciplines such as business, distance education opportunities are provided relatively frequently does not appear to be a threat to integrity (2008). Instead, dishonesty appears to reflect the students' age and lack of maturity and life situation (Kidwell and Kent 2008).

However, business is a field that attracts international students (Bretag et al. 2014). This fact could bear consequences for the type and magnitude of academic integrity-related issues in the fields of business and economics. International students may struggle with the English language, may require induction to their new learning environment, and may need support in accommodating to western conventions of referencing (Bretag et al. 2014). Business students' apparent acceptance of cheating behavior and conceptions of the teachers' role in controlling student behavior may also be associated with cultural differences (Lupton et al. 2000). Students from cultures in which social connections and reciprocal favors play an important role in academic life may have problems navigating systems that emphasize merit through personal achievement (Macfarlane et al. 2014).

While findings show that academics in management (Gao et al. 2008) and economics (Laband and Piette 2000; Necker 2014) agree on the nature of a range of behaviors, there is still substantial disagreement on the morality of various behaviors related to teaching and research. Such behaviors include acceptance of gifts, disclosure of student grades, administration of student evaluations when a negative response is expected, self-plagiarism, simultaneous submission of a manuscript to different journals, review of a known colleague's manuscript, objective evaluation of a friend for tenure and promotion, and recruitment practices based on gender, religion, ethnicity, race, age, sexual orientation, or disability (Gao et al. 2008). Moreover, some differences appear to be attributable to academic and disciplinary background. Academics in accounting and finance, which are largely based on quantitative approaches, have been shown to regard selling complementary textbook copies and norm-based grading as morally justifiable to a greater extent than their colleagues in management and marketing, where qualitative approaches are the norm (Kidwell and Kidwell 2008). Necker's (2014) study suggests that economists in academia share a consensus about integrity norms. Nevertheless, they admit to employing questionable practices, which appear to be positively related to the pressure to publish. The behaviors of academic staff signal to students the prevailing norms, and where disagreement on a large scale exists, the signals students read will be contradictory and confusing.

Sociology and Social Work

Sociology students have been found to subscribe to academic counter norms to a much lesser extent than students in chemistry, microbiology, and civil engineering (Anderson and Louis 1994). This may be because programs in which the subject itself is grounded in values and ethics (such as social work), and in which formal codes of ethics are applied, may pay particular attention to student misconduct or integrity breaches (Collins and Amodeo 2005). In common with students in psychology (Butterfield et al. 2000), students in sociology and social work may be frequently exposed to moral content and language in their subject studies.

It is evident that much of the research on academic integrity is framed in terms of the lack of it, i.e., misconduct (Macfarlane et al. 2014) involving presenting others' work as one's own, inaccurate or misleading referencing, data fabrication and manipulation, concealing information when disclosure is essential, or engaging in the planning and management of research that does not adhere to ethical standards and practice. Both students and academics in different fields of social sciences experience ambiguity about which behaviors are morally acceptable (e.g., Holmes et al. 1999; Robie and Kidwell 2003; Robie and Keeping 2005). Policy, however, and honor codes may impact on students' perceptions of problematic situations and their likelihood of reporting an academic integrity problem both in behavioral sciences (Rose and Fischer 1998) and in business subjects (McCabe et al. 2006; Bryan et al. 2009). Although the student perspective is more commonly studied than the researcher perspective, studies on researchers' integrity also focus on

misconduct and encompass themes such as fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism (Macfarlane et al. 2014). Much of the literature comes from the USA and is focused on tenure-related issues in academia (Macfarlane et al. 2014). What can be learned from the relatively substantial body of research on academic integrity in the context of business and economics is that teaching, learning, and doing research interact in complex ways with values, contextual aspects, and external pressures and incentives. Thus, future research on academic integrity must necessarily address a variety of aspects and their dynamics beyond merely individual factors.

Integrity Caveats in Research in Social Sciences: Focus on Publication

Academics in all fields face the pressure to publish and attract research funding. The pressure to publish could lead to unethical behaviors, such as tweaking data and "improving" or falsifying outcomes, and may affect implementation of research protocols. In addition to the potential conflict with research integrity, publication pressure may lead to de-emphasis of research that fails to support tested hypotheses, thus distorting the cumulative knowledge base in the long run (Gerber and Malhotra 2008).

Evidence suggests that researchers working in highly competitive environments publish more "positive" results (Fanelli 2010). The association between positive results and competitiveness of the research environment has been established across all fields. Economics and business, social sciences, and psychology do not appear to stand out as particularly problematic in this regard (Fanelli 2010). This suggests that the risk of publishing pressures distorting the objectivity or integrity of research in these fields is no greater than in others.

This, however, does not mean that the impact of publishing pressures is not a concern for all disciplines of academe. Evidence of publication bias in studies relying on statistical analyses of data has been reported in the fields of social sciences, sociology, social work, psychology, psychotherapy, education, political science, and economics (Gerber and Malhotra 2008). Gerber and Malhotra (2008) suggest preregistry of intended research, similar to the practice adopted by some journals in the field of medicine, as a remedy for correcting publication bias.

While research utilizing qualitative data typically does not aim to generalize its results, there could be other types of biases in the literature depending on which questions are deemed worthwhile or which perspectives are seen as desirable. Social scientists operate from within a variety of paradigms concerning ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. Assumptions about reality, social interactions, and knowledge creation underpin the choices of theory, research questions, research methods, and avenues for disseminating results (Drisko 1997; Payne 2000). These assumptions involve "personal and social values that can have moral consequences through the choices and actions that researchers take" (Payne 2000, p. 308), such as the treatment of questions that involve marginalized groups. The compelling issue is that the assumptions underlying the research are often

implicit and left unexplored. Greater specificity regarding goals and audiences, methodology including data analysis, identification of biases, maintenance of ethics, and the consistency of conclusions with the underlying assumptions of the research enhance the academic integrity of (social work) research (Drisko 1997). Furthermore, in conditions where researchers deal with diversity, variables, and "noise," the data do not speak for themselves, but rather it is the responsibility of the researcher to identify and determine much of the theory, method, and findings. Social scientists have many degrees of freedom to decide how to go about their research, including interpreting results (Fanelli 2013, p. 124). The importance of transparent reporting practices has been emphasized in these fields (Fanelli 2013).

Efforts to Promote Academic Integrity in the Social Sciences

This section explores measures taken in social sciences to promote high integrity standards. These include institutional measures, such as strategies and policies, and field-specific measures, such as undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral education.

Formal Ethics and Integrity Training

Mere exposure to ethical behavior does not seem to be sufficient, considering findings such as the ones in Branstetter's and Handelsman's (2000) research. In their study, advanced graduate students in psychology engaged in more unethical behaviors than their junior peers. Such findings speak for the necessity of formal integrity training. Case studies accompanied by discussion have been successfully used to introduce ethics content into undergraduate psychology education (e.g., Fisher and Kuther 1997; Zucchero 2008), business studies (e.g., Nonis and Swift 2001), and accounting (e.g., O'Leary and Cotter 2000).

The many studies suggesting that business students have a greater tolerance for unethical behavior raise questions about how to approach integrity. It has been suggested that teaching in business should take more advantage of the "can do" ethos in the world of business (Segal et al. 2011). Rather than approaching the topic by telling students what not to do, emphasis should be on what can be achieved through focus on ethical decision-making and ethically sustainable decisions. It is likely that students and academics in many other fields as well may benefit from this kind of positive approach (e.g., Brown and Howell 2001; Sutton and Taylor 2011).

There is also contradictory evidence as to the success of formal integrity training programs (e.g., Anderson et al. 2007; Bernardi et al. 2011). Students taking a compulsory ethics course may not benefit as much as students who take ethics as an elective course (Bernardi et al. 2011). One reason for why formal ethics and integrity education may fail to achieve its goals might be that the

training fails to introduce students to tools for making ethical decisions (Fly et al. 1997). Contextualization and the use of real or realistic examples facilitate the transfer of knowledge from generalized principles to ethics and integrity in practice (Löfström 2012).

Integrated Ethics and Integrity Content

It has been suggested that greater attention should be paid to the notion of honesty in ethics education and that ethical issues need to be addressed in several courses across the curriculum, including practice and placement, for the ethics to truly "seep in" and have an effect on students' thinking and behavior (Tryon 2000). Short ethics courses may not be the most fruitful method of engaging students in ethics and integrity. Providing ethics content by involving students in personal action and integrating it with subject matter content has been proven to be an effective means of instilling integrity and ethics in communication studies (Canary 2007). Similarly, the increased presence of various aspects of ethics content in an introductory course in psychology (including professional ethics, research ethics, integrity in studying, and clinical practice) has been shown to not only improve students' knowledge of ethics but also the students' ability to recognize unethical behavior (Zucchero 2008). In the teaching of ethics content to communication students, case studies and subsequent discussions in class have proven successful in terms of raising students' awareness of ethics and integrity. Such issues may not register with students if only presented in a lecture (Canary 2007). Developing students' abilities to reason about ethical and moral dilemmas necessarily requires engagement with the task and discussion.

However, there is research evidence of contradictory outcomes of integrated ethics training. The incorporation of ethics into curricula and subject matter content may in fact lead to the faculty spending less time on ethics than it would if ethics were dealt with through a single course or separate ethics courses (Beauvais et al. 2007). This evidence suggests that it is important for the faculty to consider how ethics and integrity contents fit in with the overall program and course objectives and at what points in the curriculum this content is best addressed and why.

Early Exposure to Ethics and Integrity Content

Several studies have argued for students' early exposure to ethical and moral dilemmas (e.g., Fisher and Kuther 1997; Tryon 2000; Zucchero 2008; Löfström 2012). The greatest gains may, however, appear after the age of 24 (Segal et al. 2011). More mature students may rely more on their own moral code than do younger students, who may be more vulnerable to peer pressure and other external factors (Kidwell and Kent 2008). PhD and research students are generally older than their undergraduate peers, and in that sense they may be more receptive

to discussions about integrity. There must be ways, however, of also engaging those students who will be out of college by the age of 24. To this end, it may be necessary to pay more attention to assessment practices and to designing learning environments in which integrity is clearly beneficial to the student.

Focus on Senior Academics

It has been proposed that ethics and integrity training should begin with academics instead of focusing on students meeting course requirements (Stevens et al. 1993). A rare large-scale study on researcher mentoring and training in responsible research conduct showed that the US National Institutes of Health-funded researchers in the social sciences received more mentoring (and some specifically received ethics mentoring) than researchers in certain fields of science and life sciences. While mid-career social sciences researchers reported relatively few problematic behaviors, their early-career peers were more likely than some other groups to report integrity issues in peer review and assignment of authorship (Anderson et al. 2007). These findings suggest that mentoring may be a powerful tool in terms of both decreasing and increasing behaviors that are problematic from an integrity point of view. Despite the influence that mentors and other senior academics exert on their younger colleagues and students, the training of these individuals in integrity and responsible research conduct in social sciences has received very little attention in the literature.

Academic staff members who have received ethics and integrity training feel more comfortable and spend more time teaching these and are more likely than non-trained faculty to incorporate ethics content into their teaching (Beauvais et al. 2007). University teaching staff should not only be aware of the professional standards pertaining to their field but also be able to apply them in discussions of ethical and moral dilemmas arising in their particular areas of specialization. This will facilitate student involvement in an environment where ethical decision-making is practiced on a regular basis and as part of any issues pertaining to academia or future professions (Tryon 2000).

The faculty can also show ethical behavior through their commitment to teaching and classroom presence (Nonis and Swift 2001). Showing an interest in students' learning has been shown to increase trust and reduce students' tendency toward cheating in the context of business studies (Chapman et al. 2004). Moreover, feedback from senior academics helps students in developing their ethical judgment (Branstetter and Handelsman 2000).

Special attention should be paid to teacher training for graduate teaching assistants and junior staff, such as PhD students, with teaching and supervision duties. Psychology graduate assistants with teacher training have been shown to exhibit a greater likelihood of ignoring cheating. While these students may have become more aware of academic integrity, they may also have increased their awareness of the difficulty of dealing with dishonesty (Branstetter and Handelsman 2000). It is therefore vital that junior staff members are not left alone to deal with suspicions of

potential misconduct incidents but are supported by their seniors in the community, who have the authority and responsibility to follow through with alleged cases.

Focus on the Community

Irrespective of the kind of ethical and behavioral norms that are taught explicitly, students will respond to the actual norms of the scholarly community by participating in the activities of the community and by observing senior peers and academic staff in various teaching, learning, and research activities (Kitchener 1992). Education and psychology students who have figured out the norms and values, and consolidated the institutional values with their own values, also express willingness to apply them in practice. Thus, it appears that the commitment to ethical norms and behaviors is mediated by the adoption and consolidation of related values (Rissanen and Löfström 2014), and it is of vital importance that there is an alignment of what is explicitly taught through the curriculum and what is practiced in the various activities of the scholarly community.

Shifting the focus toward the scholarly community is particularly pertinent in the case of social and behavioral sciences, in which supervision is often perceived of as a dyadic relationship (Delamont et al. 2000). In these fields, labs and teams are generally not typical supervision arrangements, and the individual relationship gains importance. When the supervision relationship remains a dyadic relationship, it is hard for others to intervene if there are problems. Research suggests that the dyadic model of supervision may be more vulnerable to integrity-related problems such as the intrusion of supervisor values, abuse, and misappropriation (Löfström and Pyhältö 2014). However, conceptualizing supervision as a community-level activity rather than the activity of individuals could help to alleviate such problems (e.g., Martinson et al. 2005).

Integrity Policy

Research on psychology and business students suggests that students look for clear guidance and descriptions of best practices rather than warnings about plagiarism and misconduct (Brown and Howell 2001; Sutton and Taylor 2011). Educators may be more successful if they describe the desired behaviors and practices rather than threatening misbehavior with dire consequences. Vague definitions of key concepts related to integrity and "friendly" warnings are not effective means of influencing students' assessment of situations incorporating an ethical issue (Brown and Howell 2001). Instead, Brown and Howell (2001) propose that key concepts be clearly defined in universities' integrity policies to avoid ambiguous interpretations. While specificity in integrity policy is necessary, academics themselves need to understand and communicate to students what is essentially meant by misconduct (Collins and Amodeo 2005). Research in the fields of psychology and business suggests that researchers and students alike may be confused about what constitutes

ethical behavior and under what conditions (e.g., collaboration versus collusion Barrett and Cox 2005; Sutton and Taylor 2011; Löfström et al. 2015).

To summarize, research on how to promote academic integrity in the social sciences suggests the following:

- Voluntary courses may carry more impact in terms of ethics competences than compulsory courses; however, relying on students to take ethics courses voluntarily will not satisfy the need of universities to assure that all students have a baseline understanding of the behaviors and practices expected of them as students and researchers-in-training.
- Ethics education in the curriculum should begin as early as possible.
- Weaving integrity content into the subject and acknowledging integrity in the curriculum will help ensure that it is sufficiently focused on in the overall program.
- Case studies are an effective means by which students can engage with questions about ethics and integrity and connect ethical content with real-life situations and practice.
- Warning students of integrity problems is not sufficient; guidance on good practice and desirable behaviors is necessary.
- Emphasis on "positive ethics" introduces a perspective that may align well with the ethos in some fields of the social sciences.
- Mentors and senior academics are important role models when it comes to signaling ethical norms and integrity standards, and thus, their training requires more attention.
- Key concepts related to academic integrity should appear and be explained in integrity policies.
- Transparency of research with an emphasis on the planning and reporting stages should be increased throughout the research process.

Academic institutions have a responsibility to ensure that their graduates understand the ethical requirements pertaining to the degree they pursue, and it is in the interest of institutions to foster integrity as an affective outcome of their programs. It is important for academic institutions to consider how integrity and ethics-related competencies can be promoted as an integral part of a university degree. It is equally important to consider how academics, including researchers and teachers, are encouraged to adhere to the highest ethical and integrity standards amidst pressures to publish and attract funding. From an institutional perspective, integrity must be seen as an indivisible feature of academic practice and competence under all circumstances.

Summary

Much of the research on integrity operationalizes the phenomenon through its opposite concepts, such as misconduct and dishonesty (Macfarlane et al. 2014). This is certainly the case with research in the area of economics and business, in

which there is a relatively broad research base, much of which is focused on students' misconduct and perceptions of (un)ethical practices. Macfarlane et al. (2014) suggest that the negative focus is due to the postmodern conception that it is inappropriate or simply not feasible to establish a set of universally legitimate norms. Rather than identifying ethical practice and related norms, the focus is thus turned toward ethical shortcomings. Indeed, a European comparison highlights the difficulty of agreeing on a set of universally legitimate norms and shows that there is consensus neither about key concepts in ethics and integrity guidance nor about content, level, timing, and frequency of ethics training and the qualifications of trainers (Godecharle et al. 2013).

The literature shows that research on the positive aspects of integrity is strongly focused on good practices in teaching, and much of this research, in contrast to that on dishonesty, comes from fields such as education and psychology. A positive institutional approach to academic integrity aligns well with a focus on developing teaching and learning (East and Donnelly 2012). Furthermore, the emphasis has been on student attitudes, conceptions, and learning, whereas a focus on the understandings of academic integrity among academics in social sciences has received less attention. Future research may benefit from an increased focus on this aspect of academic integrity, as surely academics – university teachers and researchers – are in a key position to demonstrate to students the values that academia respects and expects.

There are features that tend to distinguish social sciences from other fields, such as natural and life sciences. Research findings in social sciences tend to contribute less often (when compared to medicine or engineering, for instance) to patents and innovations that researchers benefit from financially. At the same time, the public financing available to social sciences researchers tends to be substantially less than for natural sciences. There is very little evidence on whether or how such features influence integrity in social sciences. Integrity breaches among scientists appear to be related to their perceptions of resource distribution processes embodied in academia, professional societies, and funding and publishing environments (Martinson et al. 2005). Thus, there is a need for research that focuses specifically on how these processes are perceived in disciplines within social sciences. Future studies expanding the research base in this direction might allow a better understanding of the dynamics between individuals and academia and how these dynamics influence the values and practices in different areas of social sciences.

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